GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEFENCE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2797
ANSWERED ON:05.12.2002
PURCHASE OF DIGITAL CAMERAS
RAMJI MANJHI;VSM (RETD.) COL. CHOUDHARY;VUKKALA RAJESWARAMMA

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that another scam worth crores of rupees has come to the light in the purchase of around 500 digital Cameras and other equipments for troops deployed in the Northern Command area as reported in the `Times of India` dated September 6, 2002;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the facts thereof;

(c) whether the Government have ordered Departmental Court of Enquiry to look into this alleged scam;

(d) if so, the number of officers involved therein and the source of information based on which the Government have ordered Departmental Court of Enquiry;

(e) the reasons for not referring the case for CBI Enquiry; and

(f) the steps taken by the Government to sort out the corruptions from the Defence Forces?

Answer

MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES)

(a) to (f): Prior to publication of news items dated 6th September, 2002, a pseudonymous complaint alleging irregularities in the procurement of information technology stores and 500 digital cameras by the Army Headquarters was received in the Ministry in July, 2002. In order to ascertain the facts of the case, a court of inquiry had been ordered by the Army HQrs tolook into all major purchases of IT systems. The said inquiry is still in progress. The irregularities, if any, and the persons responsible therein, will be known only on completion of the inquiry. The question of referring the matter for investigation by CBI or any other agency shall be considered on the basis of the outcome of the inquiry.

Besides others, the following important steps have been taken to bring transparency in defence purchases:

(i) Government have issued orders, in consultation with the CVC & C&AG for mandatory and time-bound scrutiny of all major procurements/purchase decisions, involving cost of above Rs. 75 crores, by C&AG and where necessary by the CVC.

(ii) Defence Procurement Board consisting of senior officers of the Ministry, three services and the Defence Finance Wing has been set up to handle major Defence purchases in a professional, transparent and cost effective manner.

(iii) In order to make the Defence procurement procedures fully transparent and to ensure probity of the highest order, the Government after careful consideration of the recommendation of the CVC, have issued instruction for involvement of authorized representatives/agents in Defence purchases. This would enhance transparency level and provide the service Hqrs., additional information about latest advances in sophisticated technology.